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23 May 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Indochina Division

SUBJECT: Background data on understanding differences  
in MACV's and the CIA/DIA estimates of  
Administrative Services Troops in South Vietnam

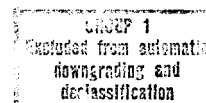
1. More than 10,000 of the 19,000 difference between MACV's Administrative Services study estimate and our estimate of AS troops is in the treatment of province and district headquarters and staffs (H & S). The remaining 9,000 difference consists of higher strengths carried by CIA/DIA for specific AS units and command echelons as well as the inclusion of units and commands not as yet picked up by MACV. MACV lists 27 province H & S compared to our 30. Of this difference, MACV apparently felt that in two cases the evidence was too sparse to estimate the H & S strength and in the third case the province just appears to have been omitted entirely from the study, a possible oversight which they may correct in future estimates. Of the remaining 27 provinces carried by MACV, we essentially agreed with the field on 16 H & S strengths, including 7 cases of rounding MACV's number. Of the remaining 11 cases, we carried higher strengths

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[REDACTED] This difference numbers nearly 1,900 men for province H & S.

2. A much larger difference exists between MACV's and CIA/DIA estimate of district H & S. The net difference in strength amounts to some 8,400 men. The major reason for the difference is that MACV's study excludes, as best as we can determine, on the order of 200 out of the total number of 240 VC districts in South Vietnam. MACV itself conservatively estimates these missing districts at about 2,400 men but does not adequately explain why they were not included in the total AS strength figure. In addition, we also have raised MACV's estimate of district H & S in cases where we felt that evidence warranted such a change. While we cannot determine precisely MACV's methodology for estimating district H & S strengths, our <sup>ESTIMATE IS</sup> based on an estimate of average strengths for all districts in a given area. These average strengths were derived

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[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] District H & S strengths ranged from a low of 20 men per district for VC Military Region 10 to a high of 70 men per district for the subregions of III Corps. In some of the subregions we agreed with MACV's estimate for the districts listed but added on to their number for missing districts.

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15 May 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD:

SUBJECT: Movement of a Major III Corps Regiment to IV Corps

1. The 15 May issue of the New York Times carries an article indicating that "large numbers" of NVA troops have been sent to the Mekong Delta. The article refers to the 273rd VC Regiment of the 9th VC Division. It further states that the strength of the Regiment is 1,500 men, but with supporting elements it might have 2,000 men. Of the total, 75 percent are said to be North Vietnamese.

2. As yet, we have no information to corroborate the details in the article.

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3. The 9th VC Division, and its subordinate regiments, traditionally has operated in III Corps' Tay Ninh Province. The 271st and 272nd Regiments have been active in the post-Tet 1969 offensive and have suffered heavy casualties. Early in May, the 271st Regiment lost nearly 300 men in two separate attacks against Allied positions near the Cambodian border.

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4. MACV carries the strength of the 273rd at 1,450 men, with a November 1968 date of information. This was the figure we included in the IIC submission to the field for 31 January 1969. Our next submission, as of 31 March 1969, may drop the figure to 1,100. In any event, the supporting units are integral to the Regiment and not in addition to it as suggested by the Times article. Of the 1,450 men we carried in the IIC submission, we estimated 60 percent (870) to be NVA.

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5. We cannot explain why the enemy would shift (if, in fact, it has) at this time a major regiment from the main infiltration route to Saigon to an obscure corner of the country. It is possible that they are merely in transit, since the area contains the infiltration corridor leading to VC Military Region 3 Headquarters in Rach Gia Province. The movement of the 273rd into the Delta could reflect efforts to beef up IV Corps units for possible offensive action during the next few months. The strength of VC Main and Local Force battalions has sharply decreased since 1967. Available information indicates that the enemy's average battalion strength in IV Corps fell from 425 to 325 during 1968, and is believed to have been reduced further since the beginning of the year. Guerrilla strength also has dropped significantly since late 1968. *IV Corps*

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TRANSMITTAL SLIP		DATE
TO:		15 May 69
ROOM NO.		STATINTL
4-G-43	BUILDING	Hdgns.
REMARKS:		
STATINTL		
FROM:		I/S
ROOM NO.	BUILDING	
3-G-35	Hdgns.	
FORM NO. 241 1 FEB 55	REPLACES FORM 36-8 WHICH MAY BE USED.	

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DER/CIA

29 Apr

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FACT SHEET

Enemy Strength In South Vietnam

1. (S) No joint DIA/CIA estimate has been established since that formulated for 31 December 1968. The focus of attention has been on the phased requirements of the Interagency Intelligence Committee and the establishment of a recurring all-source report by MACV. The Phase I requirement (NVA presence); with MACV comments, is enroute to DIA. Phase II (NVA fillers in VC units) and Phase V (VC strength) workups are to be dispatched for field comments on 28 April 1969.

2. (S) The following is a comparison of the working-level DIA all-source strength breakout, the MACV Spring-derived strength estimate, and the CINCPAC estimate for 31 March 1969:

<u>Category</u>	<u>DIA</u>	<u>MACV</u>	<u>CINCPAC</u>
NVA Subtotal	118,000	108,000	137,800
Combat	(79,000)	(71,000)	(100,500)
Filler in VC units	(24,000)	(20,000)	(20,000)
Administrative Service	(15,000)	(17,000)	(17,000)
VC Subtotal	105,000	79,000	79,000
Combat	(42,000)	(41,000)	(41,000)
Administrative Service	(63,000)	(38,000)	(38,000)
Guerrillas	(60,000)	55,000	55,000
Total Military Threat	283,000	242,000	271,500

3. (S) The reasons for the differences between the MACV and DIA NVA combat strength are unknown since the detailed field printout is not available. The very significant difference between the DIA and MACV NVA combat strength in comparison to that of CINCPAC is caused by CINCPAC's inclusion of units "which have displaced from South Vietnam, but could be introduced rapidly enough to represent a current threat to SVN."

4. (S) Recent conversations with CINCPAC representatives indicate that MACV has formed a seven-man section to formulate a recurring all-source report. This section's initial task is commenting on the IIC phased breakouts. The MACV estimate derived from Spring, as shown in paragraph 2 above, was submitted in response to a CINCPAC levied requirement for a recurring report. Action is being taken by MACV to reconcile the differences resulting from an all-source unit by unit tabulation and the loss/gain derived Spring estimate.

Prepared by:

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DOD DIR 5200.10 DOES NOT APPLY

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DIAAP-4A2/57801

Defense Intelligence Agency

1 Enclosure

31 Dec 68 DIA/CIA Approved For Release 2004/08/17 : CIA-RDP78T02095R000500070001-7

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CIA/DIA AGREED ESTIMATES OF ENEMY MILITARY-POLITICAL  
STRENGTHS IN SOUTH VIETNAM AS OF 31 DECEMBER 1968

MILITARY THREAT

<u>Combat Forces</u>	<u>150,000-180,000</u>
NVA	105,000-125,000*
VC MF/LF	45,000- 55,000
<u>Administrative Services</u>	<u>55,000- 75,000</u>
NVA	10,000- 20,000
VC	45,000- 55,000
<u>Guerrillas</u>	<u>60,000-100,000**</u>
Total Military Threat	<u>265,000-355,000</u>

OTHER IRREGULAR ORGANIZATIONS

Self Defense Forces	80,000-120,000
Assault Youth	<u>10,000- 20,000</u>
Total	90,000-140,000

POLITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE                      80,000-100,000

\* An estimated 20,000-25,000 of these NVA troops are serving in VC units. The estimate of NVA combat forces excludes an estimated 28,000 troops not representing an immediate threat, deployed north of the DMZ.

\*\* The military threat represented by the guerrilla forces is not on a parity with that of Main and Local Forces because probably only about one-third of the guerrillas are well-armed, trained, and organized.

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TRANSMITTAL SLIP		DATE
TO: <i>Ch D [initials]</i>		<i>29 Apr 69</i>
ROOM NO.	BUILDING	
REMARKS:		
STATINTL		
FROM: [redacted]		
ROOM NO.	BUILDING	EXTENSION

FORM NO. 241  
1 FEB 55

REPLACES FORM 36-8  
WHICH MAY BE USED.

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23 APR 1969

We have looked over DIA's projections of Communist manpower losses and gains for the first half of 1969. It's conclusions are not markedly dissimilar from those expressed by General Abrams in his recent cable. The following outline summarizes our comments.

First, and most important, we have serious reservations about the use of manpower balances to quantify possible changes in Communist forces in South Vietnam. This tool is useful in describing the pattern of Communist military activity, but it is far too rough to accurately estimate possible changes in enemy order of battle. Although we have consistently worked on the problem, our knowledge of enemy losses, and to a lesser extent, gains, is too weak to preclude the possibility of significant error. Rather small changes in underlying analytical assumptions can cause marked shifts in the possible size of projected enemy gains or attrition.

Nearly all analysts examining aspects of VC/NVA military manpower --  
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including (privately) [REDACTED], this paper's author -- recognize these important weaknesses of manpower balances. We believe that the balances are useful for illustrating the direction of change of the enemy's military force structure, but are of little usefulness in measuring its magnitude.

The following exercise illustrates how a minor change in assumptions or slight difference in estimates can result in different projected changes in force level.

Comparison of DIA and CIA 1st half 1969 balances:

1. Infiltration -- DIA - 78,000; CIA - 100,000-120,000

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2. Recruitment -- DIA - 36,000; CIA - 24,000-36,000

DIA uses MACV estimate of 7,000 per month suggested by "field" for first 3 months, and 5,000 per month for second 3 months (1968 MACV rate for same period).

3. Total inputs -- DIA - 114,000; CIA - 124,000-156,000
4. Total losses -- DIA - 150,000; CIA (using MACV data and procedures - 145,000
5. Net change -- DIA - (-36,000); CIA - (+11,000 to -21,000)

There is some danger in projecting an enemy manpower balance into the future because some of the key assumptions regarding both losses and gains may not be physical constraints but policy options. Based on our crude estimates of his gains and losses during the first quarter, we believe that he has probably sustained some net loss in manpower. If this net loss was

on the high side -- say 20,000 or more which assumes some combination of heavier losses and smaller inputs than we calculate -- then given his control over rate of combat and losses, we would not expect that he would opt for a strategy that would duplicate the first quarter and run his forces down another 20,000. Further, we believe that the Communists adhere to a policy of maintaining their force levels at about their present size. Although they will certainly be willing to tolerate some attenuation from time to time, particularly after offensives, they will not opt for a strategy that would entail an irreversible or prolonged strength drop.

It should also be noted that DIA has started their projection from 310,000 (the mid-point of the then agreed 265,000-355,000 range). More recent work indicates that both ends of this range should be pushed upward, although, of course, this would not affect the projected net change in force level.

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Inter-Agency Committee on the  
NVA Presence in South Vietnam  
22 March 1969

SUBJECT: Preliminary Report on Phase I and II: NVA Troops in NVA and in  
VC Administrative Service Units

1. As of 31 March 1969, the total number of VC/NVA troops in Administrative Service (AS) Units in South Vietnam is estimated to total nearly 67,000 men, of which more than 21,000 are NVA and nearly 46,000 are VC.\* Of the 21,000 NVA troops, about 12,000 were estimated in NVA units and nearly 9,000 in VC/NVA units.\*\*

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2. The estimate of 67,000 AS personnel subordinate to commands in

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South Vietnam is a conservative estimate.

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